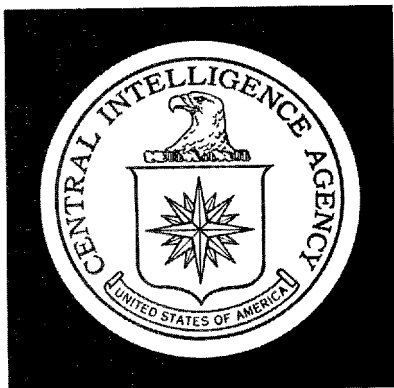


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\*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: Premier Ky continues to indicate his interest in becoming a candidate for president under the forthcoming constitution.

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[redacted]  
[redacted] he faced a major dilemma, however, in that he had previously pledged himself to support Thieu and could be politically vulnerable if he reversed himself.

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[redacted] unless Thieu concluded on his own that he lacked sufficient popular support to make the race, the matter would have to be openly discussed and resolved between them once the constitution is promulgated. Ky's reluctance to press such a confrontation may reflect a concern that Thieu enjoys considerable military backing.

Meanwhile, Constituent Assembly debate on the preliminary draft of the constitution is scheduled to open today and may continue for some weeks. Several of the more controversial principles adopted by the assembly were modified by the drafting committee, and revising apparently continued over the weekend in an effort to narrow areas of conflict between the views of the assembly and those of the Directorate.

The most potentially explosive article continues to be that authorizing the Constituent Assembly to serve as an interim legislature during the period of transition to an elected government. The US Embassy believes, however, that compromise on this issue is still possible.

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: No major encounters with enemy forces were reported over the weekend in any of the battalion-size or larger operations in which US units are involved.

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American and South Vietnamese troops continued their sweep of the "Iron Triangle" area of Binh Duong Province in Operation CEDAR FALLS, but no significant engagement with the Viet Cong main force has yet occurred. Allied forces in Operation DECK HOUSE V have withdrawn from the coastal area of Kien Hoa Province. The nine-day operation in the Mekong delta accounted for 21 enemy dead, 14 captured and 57 suspects detained. Friendly losses were eight killed and 42 wounded.

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Togo: The provisional government presented by army chief Eyadema on 14 January is regionally balanced, but weighted heavily with young, anti-French intellectuals.

The composition of the eight member reconciliation committee, which is to rule while preparing for new elections promised in about three months, represents a clear victory for activist forces within the Togolese Unity Party, the group that had long sought President Grunitzky's overthrow. Of the eight, three--who seem likely to form the core of a majority viewpoint--have a strong socialist outlook and reportedly have had close associations with Marxists in France. The nominal president of the committee and its only military member, Colonel Dadjo, is a weak and ineffectual senior officer who is not expected to provide meaningful direction.

Eyadema remains army chief of staff, a position from which he probably feels he can best protect his overriding interest--self-preservation. An insecure strong man who has frequently been uncertain as to how to cope with the political pressures swirling about him in recent months, Eyadema may soon find himself shunted aside by elements he has helped to power. Some of them have indicated they will try to do that at the first opportunity.

Grunitzky's supporters have been left out of the "reconciliation" regime and former vice president Meatchi, whose determination to gain power largely precipitated the crisis that brought Grunitzky down, is at most only indirectly represented. These and other elements can be expected to maneuver for influence during the next few months.

Paris, which had close ties with the previous regime, is clearly displeased by the developments in Togo, but for the time being the French Government is maintaining an aloof attitude.

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NOTES

Bahamas: Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) leader Pindling is the islands' first Negro Premier. Pindling was asked to form a new government following one Labor Party member's agreement to vote with the PLP and the acceptance of the neutral house speakership by the lone independent.

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Nicaragua: The general elections scheduled for 5 February appear to have been rigged to ensure a victory for General Somoza. There are, however, indications that some supporters of his opponent, Dr. Aguero, plan to provoke civil disorder in order to make the national guard appear oppressive, and thus encourage intervention by the Organization of American States. A provocation may be attempted on 22 January, when a large pro-Aguero rally is scheduled to be held in Managua. The national guard can probably control the situation, but it might use rough tactics.

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